

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

MEMORIAL

OF

CITIZENS OF MINNESOTA,

PRAYING

*The establishment of a mail route from St. Paul to the navigable waters
of the Columbia river and to Puget Sound.*

JANUARY 12, 1859.—Referred to the Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads and
ordered to be printed.

*To the Senate and House of Representatives
of the United States of America, in Congress assembled :*

The undersigned, citizens of Minnesota, respectfully represent to the Congress of the United States, that a semi-weekly mail service to the navigable waters of the Columbia river, and to Puget Sound, from some point central to the western limits of the great lakes, can be accomplished in eighteen days, provided the same encouragement is given by the government to the enterprise which has been extended to the line from St. Louis and Memphis to San Francisco.

The object of this memorial is to ask from Congress that the requisite encouragement shall be extended to the northwestern route.

Of the vast extent of American territory between the Mississippi river and the Pacific ocean, the principal portion lies north of the fortieth parallel of latitude. As proprietor of the public domain and the guardian of immature States, therefore, the general government is interested in a postal connexion, which, while indispensable to the people of Oregon and Washington, would encourage speedy settlements in the valleys of the upper Missouri river and of the Rocky mountains, and in the transmontane basin of the Columbia. We look, in vain, over more southern areas, for geographical and hydrographical relations so commanding as are presented by the limits of navigation on the lakes and Mississippi, and by the channels of the Missouri and Columbia rivers. Regarded as a question of internal policy alone, the overland transit from the northern lakes to Puget Sound challenges the favorable consideration of the government.

South of latitude 40° the federal government now expends \$2,230,698

annually for the transportation of the mails to the Pacific coast, as follows:

Semi-monthly ocean service, <i>via</i> Panama, to California and Oregon	\$738,250
Semi-monthly overland mail from San Antonio, Texas, to San Diego, California	196,448
Semi-weekly overland mail from Memphis and St. Louis, <i>via</i> El Paso, to San Francisco	600,000
Weekly overland mail from St. Joseph, Missouri, and thence to Placerville, California	320,000
Monthly route from Kansas City, <i>via</i> Albuquerque and Tejon Pass, to Stockton	90,000
Semi-monthly mail from New Orleans to Tehuantepec	250,000
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	2,194,698
Add \$36,000 for the Tehuantepec route, when the contractors choose to carry mails to San Francisco	36,000
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Total	<u>2,230,698</u>

The ocean service by the Isthmus of Panama starts from New York and New Orleans, and communicates with Oregon as well as California, and is not exclusively local in its character. Deducting, therefore, the sum first above stated, and also the payment on account of the Tehuantepec route, (which would be an aggregate of \$1,024,250,) and it leaves a total annual expenditure for mail service over American territory, between latitudes 31° and 40°, of \$1,196,448, while the area between latitudes 40° and 49° is without any overland mail service whatever.

These facts warrant the present application to Congress for the establishment of an overland semi-weekly mail on or near the forty-seventh parallel of north latitude, and that the same legislative and other provisions in its behalf shall be made which now exist in favor of the overland route near the southern frontier. More the citizens of the lake States are not disposed to ask; so much the government should be prompt to concede.

The late annual report of the Postmaster General contains a favorable intimation on this subject. In regard to the "overland connexion with California and the other Pacific States and Territories," that officer remarks: "Except one other route, commonly called the northern route, from Saint Paul, in Minnesota, to Seattle, in Washington Territory, no other is now thought of as being likely to become necessary." In a schedule of mail contracts, for which the Post Office Department has invited proposals, a semi-monthly mail service between the points named above was advertised. But a semi-monthly mail is entirely inadequate to meet the public emergency, while the necessary expenditure for stock, vehicles, stations, facilities of transit, and protection to the employed will be nearly the same under a semi-monthly as a semi-weekly contract. No proposition, which responsible and

competent parties would tender, is likely to be accepted without the intervention of Congress. Hence, bills have already been presented at Washington by Hon. H. M. Rice, senator from Minnesota, and by Hon. E. B. Washburne, representative from Illinois,—either of which, if enacted by Congress, would be satisfactory to the memorialists. We repeat and urge the request that one of these bills may speedily become a law.

The preceding statement of the current expenditures for Pacific mail service is produced with no invidious motive. We disclaim all sectional prejudice on this subject. The transit of Central America, and an overland connexion of the Gulf of Mexico with the Pacific, are objects of such importance, political and commercial, as fully to justify the appropriations in question. The citizens of Minnesota are accustomed to regard the debouchure of the Mississippi upon the Gulf of Mexico; the junction of the Ohio and the Missouri in mid channel of the Mississippi, and the head of navigation upon the Mississippi, as the prominent points of departure and distribution to the great plains of the continent; and they will advocate in behalf of routes from New Orleans to San Diego, and from St. Louis to San Francisco, the identical measures which they ask for an overland mail route from Minnesota to Oregon and Washington. Safe and speedy communications between the Gulfs of Mexico and California should be and have been established; but why not join, by similar enterprise, the converging mediterraneans of the northern lakes and Puget Sound? Not a subscriber to this memorial but would rejoice if, at the present session of Congress, three millions per annum were appropriated to open three great post routes, as already delineated—an expenditure, which, in connexion with the extinction of Indian title along the lines, a corresponding extension of land surveys and pre-emptions and some aid in the construction of roads and bridges would accomplish more to advance the Pacific railway interest than the passage of any of the measures now pending at Washington. Indeed, any or all routes of a Pacific railroad must be opened in their whole extent to settlement; must be made accessible to emigrants; must be transferred to the postal and political protection of the government, as completely as the settled districts of Minnesota, before any substantial progress is made upon the question of a Pacific railroad.

The undersigned need not enlarge upon recent events, which have made it impossible for an American statesman longer to ignore the importance of the overland mail route to the North Pacific. The discovery of the extensive gold fields upon Frazer and Thompson rivers; the organization of British Columbia; the withdrawal of the Hudson Bay Company to the districts of British America, north of latitude 55°; the abundant evidence that there is an inhabitable district northwest of Minnesota, and beyond the international frontier, fertile, rich in coal and minerals, and which, including Vancouver Island and British Columbia, has an area of five hundred thousand square miles; the late treaties with Japan and China, opening to our commerce and manufactures (even to the lumber of Oregon) an illimitable market; the rising power of Russia in Asia, with the well known friendly disposition to the people of the United States; the annexation by Russia

of the navigable Amoor river, with its tributary valleys, fully three hundred thousand square miles in extent, and constituting a most attractive field of adventure and speculation; the arrangements made and making by Russia and England, to cover the North Pacific with war and postal steamers; the British scheme of a Pacific naval station at Victoria on Vancouver Island; a similar scheme of Russian aggrandizement upon the Sea of Japan; a project believed eminently practicable for telegraphic and perhaps railway extension, from Moscow to Japan, and a telegraph thence, by the Aleutian Islands, across the North Pacific to Sitka, in Russian America; these, and other events of no less significance have transpired within the half year just closed—almost within the congressional recess. Certainly, senators and representatives cannot be insensible to the importance of a direct connexion between the leading Atlantic cities and the scenes of such imposing events.

Passing from the topics thus enumerated, and whose relation to the immediate subject may seem rather remote, we urge upon the attention of Congress some additional considerations in favor of a semi-weekly mail on the proposed route.

1. The southern boundary of Minnesota is in latitude $43^{\circ} 30'$. Extend that parallel to the Pacific, and the belt of territory enclosed by the British boundary on the north would be traversed by the mail route under consideration. The river systems revealed by the map within these limits afford the best evidence that the entire area has a fall of water ample for all the purposes of agriculture. With this important fact fully considered, the basins of the Columbia, the upper Missouri, the Yellowstone, the James, the Sioux, the Sheyenne, and tributaries of the Red River of the North, are unquestionably adequate for the organization of eight first class States. While the great plains between Minnesota and the Falls of the Missouri, and also the interior valleys of the Columbia, will constitute vast grazing ranges; the Rocky Mountains themselves are destined to witness more animated combinations of industry. The valleys are fertile, the winters are mild, useful and precious minerals abound, the hills are clothed with valuable woods, water power is abundant; and there, upon the crest of the continent, population may be expected to concentrate more than upon the great plains. Let government secure to the emigrant a wagon road, and regular mails to this most beautiful and salubrious region, and the next ten years will witness at the falls of the Missouri the same transformation, which an equal period, just passed, has wrought at the Falls of St. Anthony.

2. In the more western valleys of the Rocky mountains, several Indian tribes, half civilized by their intercourse with Catholic missionaries, own large droves of horses, these animals needing no protection in winter, and finding sufficient sustenance along the margins of mountain streams. This is the case, even at Fort Benton, two degrees north of St. Paul, and situated at the eastern base of the Rocky mountains. Contractors could always obtain horses from the Flathead, Nez Percés, or Kootonais Indians, at moderate cost, and whenever necessary. The Crow and Blackfeet Indians, who inhabit the eastern valleys of the Rocky mountains, have a breed of horses, noted

among trappers as superior to the animals found among more southern tribes. The northern route has a great advantage, in this respect, over the central or southern.

3. There is an abundance of water, for the use of man and beast, at every point of the route. We have already referred to the general and sufficient fall of rain; as a consequence, springs and rivulets are always accessible.

4. The hostile Indian tribes of Washington Territory have been effectually subdued by the late military campaign. Parties who have recently passed without molestation from the navigable waters of the Columbia to Fort Benton, on the Missouri, report that the Indians in the Bitter Root valley and elsewhere, are very desirous that a regular communication should be established by wagon roads and mail carriers between the head of navigation on the Columbia and the Mississippi States.

5. The distance from Saint Paul and the western end of Lake Superior to the shores of Puget Sound, as ascertained by Governor Stevens, is, in round numbers, 1,800 miles. On the southern route the distance is 2,795 miles from St. Louis to San Francisco; and the average speed is 100 miles a day. We are justified in fixing the time of the transit from Minnesota to the Pacific, at eighteen days.

6. With our Minnesota experience, we unhesitatingly assert that a northwestern winter, with its moderate but permanent snow-fall, the frozen streams and marshes, the subsidence of the wind at seasons of extreme cold, and the increase of animal vigor, is advantageous to an overland mail service. One fact is most unquestionably established, that the winters are less rigorous at all parallel points westward of our boundaries, than in Minnesota, growing sensibly milder with every degree of west longitude, until, at the sources of the Missouri river, as already stated, horses and cattle do not require shelter.

The mail route from Dubuque to St. Paul over the prairies of northern Iowa and southern Minnesota, has been served hitherto during the winter, very successfully, and no portion of the route to Puget Sound is more unfavorable. At all events, contractors can be found, having ample experience in the climate of Fort Snelling, who are ready and willing to assume all the risks of "snow and ice," if Congress will give the aid asked by this memorial.

7. Perhaps a single illustration may have greater weight than any array of argument. Hon. Isaac I. Stevens, in a recent discussion before the New York Geographical and Statistical Society, produces on the authority of Mr. Collins, American consul on the Amoor, some interesting and pertinent facts in relation to the great postal service from Moscow to Irkoutsk in Eastern Siberia. The distance is not 1,800 miles, but 3,426 miles. On this route are established two hundred and ten stations, with a postmaster and the necessary relays of horses at each station—sixteen and two-thirds miles to each relay of horses. The contractors are obliged to carry the mails twice a week, and they are also obliged to transport passengers over the route at certain rates of speed, to wit, at eight miles an hour in winter, six and two-thirds in summer, and five and one-third in the fall. (Our Minnesota time tables show the same proportions at different seasons.)

The time required to carry the mails from Moscow to Irkutsk is twenty-five days, a distance on the average, of 112 to 137 miles per day, while the government couriers go over the route in fifteen to twenty days, or at an average of 171 to 228 miles per day. The mail route is between the fifty-second and fifty-eighth parallels, and the thermometer in winter on a large portion of it is habitually below zero. At Moscow, the western terminus of the route, the average of the thermometer is 15 degrees, and at Tobolsk $1\frac{1}{2}$ degrees above zero, while at Tomsk it is three degrees, and at Irkutsk one degree below zero. The average temperatures for January, 1857, for the three latter places, were respectively three, five, and six degrees below zero. Mr. Collins himself travelled over the entire route in winter and early spring, making such rates of speed, as from Verchneodinsk to Chetah, 300 miles, in forty-five hours, and from Irkutsk to Kiachta, 367 miles, in forty-eight hours. But he mentions another fact more significant still. On this distance of 3,426 miles, between the parallels of 52 degrees and 58 degrees, the thermometer on a large portion of it through the winter being below zero, he found 500 hundred cities, towns, and villages, showing conclusively that the extreme cold presented no difficulty in the way of occupation of the country.

In the face of such a statement, will Congress hesitate to establish across the American continent a postal communication in the temperate climate of the 47th parallel of latitude—a parallel, which, if extended across the Atlantic, traverses southern France, northern Italy, and the Crimea, and which if extended across the Pacific, is central to the Japanese empire, and the magnificent valley of the Amoor. Such a girdle of the globe is south, not north, of the heart of christendom and civilization.

The memorialists close with the expression of the confidence that there will be no denial or delay by Congress in making provision for a semi-weekly overland mail service from the northwestern States to the valley of the Columbia and the shores of Puget Sound.

RESOLUTIONS.

Resolved, That the distribution of population and the development of commerce in the zone bounded on the north by the international line of 49° and on the south by the 43d parallel of latitude, embracing as well the valleys of the great lakes, the upper Mississippi, and the transmontane slopes of Washington and Oregon, reaching to the Pacific ocean and Puget Sound, create a necessity for immediate action by the national government, to open postal communication, at least semi-weekly, through this immense region; the necessity being the more immediate and pressing inasmuch as British enterprise, through the aid of its government, is about to establish a northern communication with the Pacific, and make our people dependent upon them for the mail facilities they are entitled to at the hands of their government, a government which has already manifested its liberality towards such enterprises by the annual expenditure of a million and a half of dollars for the extension of postal facilities between the Mississippi and the Pacific south of the 40° of north latitude.

Resolved, That we, the people of Minnesota, many of us long resident in this region of country and entirely familiar with it, hereby bear our testimony to the fact that a northern stage route to Puget Sound, conveying passengers and the United States mail, is eminently practicable, and would not be interrupted by winter's cold or depth of snow, nor by any difficulty incident to climate or latitude.

Resolved, That we hereby tender the thanks of the people of Minnesota to Senator Rice and the Hon. E. B. Washburne, of Illinois, for their promptitude in calling the attention of Congress to this important enterprise, and we ask the friends of Minnesota, of the northwest, and especially our senators and representatives in Congress, to aid us in the construction of this great work, so essential to the growth and commerce of the country between the lakes and the Pacific.

Resolved, That as the best means of carrying out the purpose of this meeting, we respectfully urge upon the Board of Trade to take charge of this work, and invite the co-operation of other similar bodies to secure its early consummation.

Resolved, That a committee of seven be appointed by the chair to take charge of the enterprise, and solicit the attention of Congress and arouse the country generally to its importance.

Resolved, That the papers of this city and of the State be requested to publish the proceedings, and that copies be forwarded to each of our senators and representatives in Congress, and to the President and the Postmaster General.

